

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 864

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to recognize and commend John S. Wilder for his many contributions as a public servant on the occasion of the *2007-2008 Tennessee Blue Book* being dedicated in his honor.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly now pauses to recognize the singular legacy of John Shelton Wilder as Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate of Tennessee, a public servant, and a gentleman; and

WHEREAS, now serving his 42<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year and 44<sup>th</sup> year overall in the Senate, John S. Wilder provided stalwart and innovative leadership as Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate for 18 consecutive terms and 36 years, and holds the record for the longest continuous service by the elected presiding officer of any legislative body in the nation and, as far as is known, in the free world; and

WHEREAS, during his illustrious tenure in the Senate, John S. Wilder has not only been a faithful servant of his district, he has also demonstrated the vision and fortitude necessary to move Tennessee forward as a State; and

WHEREAS, John S. Wilder began his legendary political career in 1958 as the Secretary-Treasurer of Board of Supervisors of the Fayette County Soil Conservation District, which he helped organize and later served as Chair, and also served 18 years on the Fayette County Quarterly Court; and

WHEREAS, believing strongly in the motto "Use Without Abuse", he has been active in the soil conservation movement at the local, state, and national levels; and

WHEREAS, John S. Wilder served with distinction as President of both the Tennessee Association of Soil Conservation Districts and the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts, and during his national presidency, he achieved the incredible feat of knowing all 3,000 conservation supervisors by their first names; and

WHEREAS, this noble son of the soil, who has been engaged in farming and cotton ginning his whole life, was deservedly inducted into the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts Southeastern Region Hall of Fame in 2006; and

WHEREAS, on Capitol Hill, John S. Wilder has worked with purpose and conviction to assist his fellow farmers and the agricultural community as a whole by establishing the Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund, which utilizes a small portion of realty transfer taxes to generate six million dollars per year to conserve soil and water resources in all 95 Tennessee counties; and

WHEREAS, a native of Fayette County, John S. Wilder is truly a Renaissance Man; he has demonstrated his talents as a farmer, banker, merchant, attorney, and aviator; and

WHEREAS, he is also a skilled negotiator and peacemaker, and was instrumental in resolving a local civic rights struggle known as Tent City; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of the University of Tennessee College of Agriculture and the University of Memphis School of Law, John S. Wilder was long involved in the management of the Longtown Supply Company, a family firm founded in 1887; and

WHEREAS, he has been an avid aviator for fifty years and holds advanced ratings as a pilot; he was inducted into the Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame in 2005; and

WHEREAS, John S. Wilder has expressed his devout Christian faith as a member of Braden Methodist Church for the past fifty years, serving as a lay leader; and

WHEREAS, the patriarch of a large and loving family, he treasures the relationships he has with his sons and daughter-in-laws, David and Patti Wilder and Shelton and Judy Wilder; his grandchildren, Jarod Wilder, Whitney Wilder, John Wilder III, and Joseph Wilder and his wife, Heather; and his great grandchildren, Suzie, Jess, Russell, Ansel, and Marcelle Wilder; his beloved wife, Marcelle Morton Wilder, was his steadfast companion until her passing in 2004; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his exemplary tenure as Speaker of the Senate, John S. Wilder received a special Leadership Award from the National Conference of State Legislatures in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Senator Wilder established the John S. Wilder Institute for Public Service at Lambuth University in Jackson; this unique institute is dedicated to educating students in the area of nonpartisan public service; and

WHEREAS, John S. Wilder has certainly been no stranger to awards and accolades during his distinguished career in public service; the Tennessee Youth Development Center in Fayette County was named in his honor in 1975, and the John S. Wilder Tower was dedicated at the University of Memphis in 2003; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, a bronze bust of John S. Wilder was dedicated in that same tower and another bronze bust of him, funded by Friends of Wilder, resides in the Fayette County Courthouse; the John S. Wilder Community Center is located in Grand Junction, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, most recently, the *2007-2008 Tennessee Blue Book* was dedicated to John S. Wilder, with Secretary of State Riley Darnell aptly stating in the dedication page: "His legacy of fairness, honesty and compassion will continue to enhance the lives of his fellow Tennesseans for many years"; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly firmly believes that no truer words have ever been spoken; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that on the occasion of the *2007-2008 Tennessee Blue Book* being dedicated in his honor, we hereby recognize our trusted colleague and advisor, John S. Wilder, upon his singular career as a public servant, noting especially his legendary 36-year tenure as Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Senate of Tennessee. We humbly thank John S. Wilder for his many valuable contributions to the public welfare and wish him all the best as he continues to serve his fellow Tennesseans with vision, probity, integrity, and compassion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to John S. Wilder as a token of our esteem, with this final clause omitted from such copy.